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ABSTRACT

The position paper examines the roles and responsibilities which adult educators might assume in parent and early childhood education. Written in response to the widely-held view that the American family today is beset by serious problems, the paper attempts to explore, sensitize, and inform the adult education profession of the possibilities available to assist parents in their critical role of child raising. It is felt that adult education can provide delivery systems, coordinate activities, and identify existing resources and processes for finding solutions. The neighborhood-based family resource delivery system is recommended by the council as the optimal means for meeting the needs of the family unit. It is conceived as a locally based, problem identification and solving mechanism, using local resources and involving the family itself in the problem-solving process. (NJ)

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POSITION PAPER

The Roles and Responsibilities of Adult Education Within Parent/Early Childhood Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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OCTOBER 1975

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION

425 - 13th STREET, N.W., SUITE 323
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

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Presidential Appointees

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College Park, Maryland

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Big Rapids, Michigan

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Judith N. Turnbull
Chicago, Illinois

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Dr. Gary A. Eyre
Executive Director

Carlene L. Turman
Assistant Director

Helen G. Banks
Administrative Assistant

National Advisory Council on Adult Education, 1975

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I. SUMMARY: POSITION STATEMENTS

Adult educators must assist parents in the development of Parent/Early Childhood Education Programs.

Parent/Early Childhood Education programs must be flexible, open and responsive to family unit needs, wants and aspirations.

Community-based needs assessment techniques and strategies must be used at the family-unit level.

Adult educators must work with all possible agencies and organizations, as coordinators, initiators and facilitators.

Adult educators must encourage business and industry support of Parent/Early Childhood Education Programs.

Adult educators must assist in the development of parenting skills to increase parental understanding of children's social, emotional and physical growth as well as their mental development.

Adult educators must investigate the Family Education Specialist role and must encourage parent/family education courses in graduate schools for all prospective adult educators.

Adult educators must assume a responsibility for increasing support for Parent/Early Childhood Education.

Adult educators must continue to work with non-formal agencies in non-traditional settings in support of Parent/Early Childhood Education.

Adult educators must develop support systems for Parent/Early Childhood Education programs in rural areas.

Adult educators must assess existing programs, facilities and resources for the purpose of better utilization of all resources.

Adult educators must be facilitators of positive institutional change.

II. INTRODUCTION

The 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth served to alert American educators and indeed, all Americans, to the problems facing the American family unit as the first educational delivery system for the child.

As one group of concerned educators and citizens, the National Advisory Council on Adult Education began to examine the roles and responsibilities which adult educators might assume in providing further assistance to the family unit as it assumes parenting roles. The U.S. Commissioner of Education was also addressing the problems of parents as the first educators of children, and it was natural that discussions between the Commissioner and the Council on this vital subject should ensue.

In October 1974, the National Advisory Council on Adult Education was asked by the Regional Commissioner of Education, Region VIII, to send a representative to meet with a preliminary "brainstorming" group gathered to discuss a proposed Parent/Early Childhood Education meeting to be held in Denver, Colorado, the following spring. As a result of interest stimulated at this meeting, contact was made with the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. T. H. Bell, who expressed a desire that the Council provide him with a position paper on the possible roles and responsibilities which adult educators might take in the newly evolving Parent/Early Childhood Education thrust.

In December of 1974, the Commissioner of Education expressed his continued interest and support of the development of this paper. At the National Advisory Council on Adult Education meeting in January 1975, the Council passed the following motion and took further action in approving the procurement of a

consultant to the Council for the development of a position paper on the role of adult education in a program thrust for Parent/Early Childhood Education.

January 25, 1975, Council minutes: Motion #6, page 21.

> In support of Commissioner Bell's community/home/school based parent/childhood education program, the Council recommends that the U.S. Commissioner of Education recognize and support adult education in its parent/family/home educational responsibility role by allocating an equitable proportion of the earmarked funds for parent/childhood education for adult innovative and demonstration projects.

A consultant was immediately retained and began working with the Governmental Relations and Legislation standing committee of the Council on a position paper to be called: "The Roles and Responsibilities of Adult Education within Parent/Early Childhood Education." On March 6, the Executive Director of the Council again communicated with the Commissioner of Education on behalf of the Council as follows:

> The Council supports your "outreach" concept of assisting parents and surrogate parents in providing an enriched learning environment in the home and in concert with those local agencies providing education.
>
> As you begin to allocate funds for implementing a parent/early childhood education thrust, the Council recommends that financial resources be provided for the development of innovative special projects which would focus on the involvement of adult education as a viable partner in responsible parenthood.

Development of the paper continued, and in early May an Interim Position Paper was presented at the National Conference on Parent/Early Childhood Education held in Denver, Colorado, for the purpose of securing participant

reactions and recommendations. Response to the Interim Paper at the conference provided adequate information to facilitate the development of a final paper. On May 13, 1975, the Commissioner of Education communicated with the Council:

> I am very pleased that the Council has seized the initiative in identifying the roles and responsibilities of adult education in relation to this effort. Paul Delker has told me of the excellent responses provided the Council through the workshop sessions at the Denver conference.

Finally, on August 15, 1975, the Council presented to the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. T. H. Bell, this Position Paper on "The Roles and Responsibilities of Adult Education within Parent/Early Childhood Education" for discussion, with the request to the Commissioner that funding levels be increased to support all activities in this, perhaps the most critical and least supported area of American education today.

The National Advisory Council on Adult Education commends the support and concern of the Commissioner and U.S. Office of Education, and will continue to respond to the field of adult education as the roles and responsibilities of adult educators emerge more clearly and change to meet the emergent needs of this new field.

III. PHILOSOPHY OF THE COUNCIL REGARDING THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADULT EDUCATION WITHIN PARENT/EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A. The Need for a Position Paper

The National Advisory Council on Adult Education has, through its involvement with various groups of adult educators which the Advisory Council represents, perceived a need to explore and define roles and responsibilities of adult education within the Parent/Early Childhood Education concept as this (concept) is currently evolving.

The 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth partially identified the overall problem facing Parent/Early Childhood Education in a report on Children and Parents:

> In today's world, parents too often find themselves at the mercy of a society which imposes pressures and priorities that allow neither time nor place for meaningful activities involving children and adults, which downgrades the role of parents and the functions of parenthood, and which prevents the parent from doing the things he wants to do as a guide, friend, and companion to his children...the actual patterns of life in America today are such that children and families all too often come last... we are experiencing a breakdown in the process of making human beings human...by setting our priorities elsewhere, by claiming one set of values while pursuing another, we leave our children bereft of standards and support, and our own lives impoverished and corrupted.

At best, family life is fragile and often delicately balanced. By its very nature, it involves a polarity of feelings: love and hate, grief and joy, anxiety and relief. It is the primal center at the very core of the fundamental agenda of life. It is the basic socialization unit for parents as well as for children -- it provides the setting in which one can, and must be human. And it is beset today

by the shattering pace of societal change and battered by problems never before felt in the history of man.

Dr. James J. Gallagher, Director of the Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, has said,

> In previous generations the "extended families" of aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc., offered needed support and provided a buffer to the family with small children. The modern family is extended only in a geographical sense, with relatives scattered across the country and often in little position to help each other. There is a good reason to doubt that many nuclear families comprised of a husband, a wife and two children are able to survive stress alone. Even less able to survive without assistance are the single parent or divorced parent families. As members of this American society, we must become a kind of "extended family" and assist parents and their children.

The United States Commissioner of Education, Dr. T. H. Bell, has written, "America expects more of education than it does of other institutions. It expects educators to extend a helping hand, to go that extra mile," and a leading adult educator, Dr. Jack C. Ferver of the University of Wisconsin in a recent statement on the American family: "...the family will increasingly need assistance of many and varied types to survive...and adult and family life educators are in the best possible position to provide this assistance."

Adult educators have demonstrated minimal awareness, however, of the problem facing the American family unit[1] and of the potential of their role in the solution of these problems. A major reason,

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[1]"The American Family Unit" referred to throughout this paper will mean the family, in whatever form it may take: nuclear, single-parent, kin networks, institutions as families, communal, etc.

therefore, for the development of this Position Paper is to explore, to sensitize, and to inform the adult education profession of the vital possibilities available to become involved in a critically needed national effort to increase the quality of the American family unit's life...to go that extra mile. Another major reason for the development of this paper is to provide assistance to the U.S. Commissioner of Education as he sets policy with regard to Parent/Early Childhood Education, and to supply him with information on the role and responsibility of adult educators within the totality of this effort.

If the involvement of adult educators in Parent/Early Childhood Education has been minimal, it is only partly due to a lack of awareness on the part of the adult education profession as to its potential. This low level of involvement can also be attributed to a lack of understanding on the part of all other education publics -- Early Childhood/ Preschool, Elementary and Secondary, and Higher Education -- as well as the general public -- of what adult education can provide. As Americans, we have historically and traditionally tended to view problems in isolated units and those problems involving the education and the development of very young children have been delegated to Early Childhood Education. In this age of calculated interdependency, such continued isolationism can no longer be tolerated.

The problems facing families of all types (including the family forms which contain surrogate parents)[2], and those families involving young children in particular, today threaten the very fabric of American life. Every possible resource must be maximally utilized to

[2]"surrogate" - One who is substituted for another; a substitute.

find solutions. The 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth concluded that: "America's families are in trouble, trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of the nation." The National Advisory Council on Adult Education shares this serious concern. It is one position of the Council that although the family (broadly defined) has been able to survive in spite of the frantic rate of societal change, it cannot continue to function at even a barely adequate level without carefully coordinated assistance and support from the neighborhood, the world of work, and from social and political institutions at the local, State and national levels. It must increasingly become the role and responsibility of the adult educator to coordinate and assist in the provision of the services which are necessary if families and surrogate families are to reach their maximum quality of life.

B. Role of the Council

The National Advisory Council on Adult Education, in approaching the issues involved in a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of adult education in Parent/Early Childhood Education, seeks to maintain a role of catalyst and facilitator by providing a forum for discussion and a sounding board for the widest possible variety of ideas. Mandated by the United States Congress to "advise the Commissioner in the preparation of general regulations and with respect to policy matters arising in the administration of (adult education programs), to review the administration and effectiveness of (Federally funded adult education programs) and make recommendations with respect thereto, and make annual reports to the President," as

well as "effectuate the coordination of programs offering adult education activities and services," the National Advisory Council on Adult Education also seeks, through the development of a position paper and the ensuing discussions, to continue to fulfil a coordinating role, hopefully assisting in bringing the resources of all American education publics together in a cooperative effort to more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of the American family unit, whatever that unit might be.

IV. RATIONALE FOR THE PAPER

On November 18, 1974, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. T. H. Bell, addressed the Council of Chief State School Officers on the subject of "outreach" which he defined as, "...extending a helping hand -- to go that extra mile -- to make that special commitment of time and talent and personal involvement that can change other people's lives for the better." He further discussed a new program authorized under Title IV of the Education Amendments of 1974 (Public Law 93-380) for the education of preschool children in the home and in day care centers. Complimenting the number of successful projects already in existence, Commissioner Bell spoke directly to the possible role of adult education in this, his highest priority area, early childhood education.

> ...there is a critical gap. What is missing is a systematic way to bring together the best components of these individual (early childhood education) projects, to add missing elements, to develop a model that can be adopted or adapted elsewhere. A simple model using available resources wherever possible...

To this end, adult education can and must respond to Commissioner Bell.

The Congress, too, is recognizing the need to provide assistance to the family unit. The Child and Family Services Act of 1975 introduced in the House of Representatives on February 6, 1975, as H.R. 2966 and in the Senate on February 7, 1975, as S. 626, states:

> ...the family is the primary and the most fundamental influence on children: child and family service programs must build upon and strengthen the role of the family...offering families the options they believe are most appropriate for their particular needs...it is the purpose of this Act to provide a variety of quality child and family services in order to assist parents who request such services, with priority to those preschool children and families with the greatest economic or human needs in a manner designed to strengthen family life and to insure decision-making at the community level with direct participation of the parents of the children served and other individuals and organizations in the community interested in child and family service (making the best possible use of public and private resources), through a partnership of parents, State and local government and the Federal government, building upon the experience and success of Headstart and other existing programs.

The National Advisory Council on Adult Education recognizes its responsibility to assist the Congress, through such efforts as this Position Paper, in identifying the potential roles and responsibilities of adult educators in this overall effort.

As the Congress and the Commissioner of Education are addressing these needs, there is increasing awareness on the part of both education and general publics that education does not take place solely in school settings after age five or six. Commissioner Bell:

> ...only in the past few decades have research studies begun to demonstrate the importance of the first five years of life in the intellectual and social development of children. Only in the ten years or so just past has extensive research led us to conclude that what is done by the family and the home environment

> has a far greater influence on children than anything the schools can do -- or undo. Now we know the value of systematically encouraging the cognitive development of children at a very early age. We know that most of a child's basic intelligence has been formed by the time he reaches school age. And we know that (the) development (of this intelligence) is greatly advanced when parents are trained to be active participants in the learning process.

Judith S. Helm, Executive Director of the National Council of Organizations for Children and Youth, in testimony before the Congress:[3]

> We now know with a great deal of certainty that the first five years of life are a most important period for the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development of a child. We used to think that 0-5 were years to mark time before children were ready to learn. We now know with a great deal of certainty that if a child does not learn many very important things during this critical period, the child will be seriously handicapped in acquiring these skills. We also know with great certainty that prenatal nutrition and early intervention are crucial to the healthy development of young children. To argue that it is still possible to intervene later makes no sense when we know that it is easier and better to begin early... to ignore these facts and to deprive millions of children of a healthy and stimulating early development is simply crazy if we care anything about our future generation.

Burton White, noted early childhood educator and director of the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Preschool Project recently stated:

> ...children start to learn long before our educational system begins to concern itself with them. Traditionally, in this country and in every other western country where

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[3]The Senate Subcommittee on Children and Youth, the House Select Subcommittee on Education, and the Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Poverty, and Migratory Labor on the Child and Family Services Act of 1975 on February 21, 1975.

> there has been any writing on the history of education, the society first puts money into the teaching job when the children get to be about six years of age. As far as I can find in writings, no society has ever put a lot of money into the first years of life. Yet everybody knows that children are learning from the first day they come into the world...by the time they are three years of age, most children have the capacity to understand most of the language they will use in ordinary conversation for the rest of their lives. Language is at the heart of educational capacity.

White goes on to succinctly stress the importance of the first years of a child's life:

> When we see a child for the first time at two years of age it is too late. They are crystallized into their basic social patterns. A human personality is being formed during those first two years, and there is no job more important than doing that well...there are four topic areas which are the foundations of educational capacity: language development, curiosity, social development and the roots of intelligence. They are all undergoing basic formative development in the first three years of life, and the national educational system essentially ignores that fact. Indeed, failures in these learnings in the first years lead directly to underachievement in the elementary grades and beyond... and failures in the first years are extremely difficult to correct, using any means we now have available.

We now know that each waking hour is supremely critical to the child in his developmental process -- and thus the relationship of the parent or parent-surrogate to the child becomes equally critical. Adult education can provide a model and a delivery system by which the parent's ability to respond and relate to his child is greatly enriched. Burton White: "I think there has been a kind of assumption in the minds of some people that the way children get educated is through contact with a professional in a classroom or a center. I do not think that is the way it is going to happen, and I do not think that is the way it should happen. I think the way it is going to happen is through the family as the first educational

system, rather than through a developmental day care center."

Many feel today that the American family is deeply in trouble, and the report of the 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth cited the following data as indicators of the magnitude of concern:

...The population continues to grow with little provisions for adequate child care and parenting education. There were almost four million births in 1974.*

...One of every ten 17 year-old girls is a mother.

...Three out of four teenage marriages end in divorce.

...The rate of divorce is moving toward a cumulative rate of one divorce in every four marriages. In 1974, there were approximately 970,000 divorces in the United States, which is approximately 4.6 per 1,000 population.*

...One out of every five children live in single-parent homes.

...Over 60 percent of homocides occur within families by family members or friends.

...The increase in "domestic" calls to our police departments indicates severe strife and violence in marriages and families.

...Child abuse and neglect by parents is increasing at an alarming rate.

...Approximately ten percent of all school-age children have moderate to severe emotional problems.

...Even among marriages that are intact, they are rarely reported to be sources of personal satisfaction. Marriage and family life does not now provide the environment many adults expect or desire.

A healthy family environment is essential to the well-being of all its members, and the appalling data just listed can only be changed through the development of such an environment. It can become a primary role of the adult educator to facilitate the attainment of this healthy environment through existing or new resources, combinations of resources, or delivery systems.

Parents today are becoming increasingly aware of their needs to understand better the developmental process/stages of their children, and how

*Information updated as of June 1, 1975, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

these stages relate to the world in which we live. At the same time, parents are recognizing with increasing frequency that their mothers and fathers were the last generation to raise their children to live in a world which they themselves were familier with. The family unit today is faced with necessity to cope with a culture different in kind to the one originally transmitted to it. Tomorrow will be unlike today in myriad ways, for much of yesterday's knowledge is obsolete and parenting has become a complex challenge which few wish to face alone. Margaret Mead cogently comments that:

> ...children today face a future that is so deeply unknown that it cannot be handled, as we are currently attempting to do, as a generation change with cofiguration, within a stable, elder-controlled and parentally modeled culture... within two decades, 1940-1960, events occured that have irrevocably altered men's relationships to other men and to the natural world. The invention of the computer, the successful splitting of the atom and the invention of fission and fusion bombs, the discovery of the biochemistry of the living cell, the exploration of the planet's surface...

She further emphasizes the irreversibility of the hiatuses separating the old from the young through her statement:

> Even very recently, the elders could day: 'You know, I have been young and <u>you</u> never have been old.' But today's young people can reply: 'You never have been young in the world I am young in, and you never can be.'[4]

Parents are seeking assistance, and finding it in nooks and corners of their communities -- but few find the resources to fully meet their needs. Adult education cannot always provide solution, but it can provide delivery

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[4]Margaret Mead, CULTURE AND COMMITMENT (Garden City, New York: Natural History Press/Doubleday and Company Inc., 1970), p. 45.

systems, existing resource identification and coordination structures, and processes for finding solutions.

Because adult education can facilitate the type of problem-solving needed to meet the needs of the American family unit, it is of critical importance today for the profession to carefully examine all facets of the totality that comprises adult education. What types of delivery systems are available in local communities to meet family unit needs? What resources are available, and what new or unused resources can adult educators identify and utilize? What structures are in existence now, and what might be combined for more effective and efficient problem-solving? How might various types of resources be used more efficiently, and more effectively? What are the resources currently available within a given neighborhood? All of these questions and more must be asked and asked again -- by adult educators and of adult educators -- as we seek solutions together. Commissioner Bell's critical gap can be closed -- and it is the responsibility of adult education to facilitate the process.

V. THE NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED FAMILY RESOURCE DELIVERY-SYSTEM

The U.S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. T. H. Bell has written:

> ...because of the emotion, the political conflict, and the lack of public finances, it appears that public-sponsored, far-reaching, early childhood education is a long way from becoming a reality -- if indeed it ever will. This places a great responsibility upon parents who are concerned about their small children and who conscientiously desire to provide the maximum opportunities for them...parents should be taught the fundamentals of early childhood education, of how to recognize and seize upon the fleeting teaching moments in a small child's life... they should be helped to convert the child's home environment into a powerful learning laboratory so that the child will grow intellectually during those

> vital first five years of his life. Parents should realize that the opportunity to take full advantage of early childhood intellectual development comes only once in each child's lifetime. Most of it comes before the child enters school.[5]

In order to carry out the mission described by Commissioner Bell, parents must be made aware of and have access to many different types of resources which may or may not be available within the immediate community. They must have access to a Neighborhood-Based Family Resource-Delivery System. Today, not enough organized effort is being expended to identify and mobilize needed resources for the purpose of helping parents help their very young child's intellectual and social development -- and yet the majority of these needs can undoubtedly be met within each neighborhood or local community. A variety of human, physical and even financial resources are immediately accessible there, and the initiation of problem-solving activities at the local level allows for the critical component of parental involvement in the planning as well as the problem-solving processes. The family unit can be worked with, and not around. Parents can become the primary agents of change, involved in policy and administrative decision-making.

Burton White has questioned the role for education in relationship to parents and young children:

> If there is a role for education, what is it? First of all, we have to accept the fact that professional educators, working directly with young children, expecially children over six years of age, have much less influence on development than was previously thought. The second thing educators must do is recognize that the family is ordinarily the first

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[5] Your Child's Intellect by T. H. Bell
Olympus Publishing Co., Salt Lake City, Utah, 1972.

> educational delivery system for the child, and accept and face the consequences of that fact, seriously. Third, we should prepare and assist the family for that fundamental educational job...(by offering) adult education courses, year in and year out, for pregnant women and their husbands...for the first six years of a child's life, especially the first three, (by making) available continuing, low pressure, strictly voluntary training for parents... (by providing) referral service for special needs, an ombudsman function...through neighborhood resource centers...(by) strengthening the family for its role as the child's first educational delivery system.

The Neighborhood-Based Family Resource-Delivery System can, using teams of resource personnel and local residents, reinforce or supplement local customs and norms rather than violate them. Such a system can and should involve local community leaders. It should work through and with the local political structure. Identifying problems and concerns at the level where they occur may well be the only realistic means of identifying and working with local value systems rather than being used or destroyed by them.

A Neighborhood-Based Family Resource-Delivery System is, therefore, a locally-based, problem-identification and problem-solving mechanism, using to the maximum extent possible local resources and involving to the maximum extent possible those for whom it is designed to serve -- children, parents: the family unit, whatever that unit might be.

VI. STATE OF THE ART OF ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education programs, existing in various forms and with various structures throughout the total fabric of American life, have already available many unique capabilities for bridging the gap between family unit needs and available resources -- as well as the capabilities to develop new resources when required. Adult education is pervasively present in

communities, institutions, agencies and organizations that do not necessarily require a public building or a critical problem area (drugs, environment, metrics) to exist. It is this very pervasiveness which suggests continuity and perpetuity.

A basic tenet of adult education is the involvement of people in planning for any type of program in which they might be taking part -- that people support what they help create. Adult education deals with the decision-makers in our society: adults.

Another tenet in adult education is the need for community study to determine areas for service. Community-based committees and advisory boards of various kinds are already in existence, many with capabilities to assess, or having already assessed the geographical distribution of people and facilities, the social structure, and the institutional structure of a community. Eight different types of committees have been identified by Leonard Nadler as already in operation in adult education: activity, administrative, coordinating, dialogue, inspection, judicial, program and study. The purposes of these committees and boards vary and include advice, fact-finding, problem-solving, decision-making and the creation of new ideas.[6] Obviously these structures can provide an immediately available and experienced source for initiating a Neighborhood-Based Family Resource-Delivery System.

In addition to committees and advisory boards, adult education programs are staffed by personnel specifically trained to work with adults. Adult educators also have experience in curriculum development, the use of various instructional strategies and techniques, assessment and program evaluation,

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[6]From Priorities in Adult Education edited by David B. Rauch.

community needs assessment, the administration of community-based service programs and the involvement of local residents. Frequently community leaders are deeply involved in and committed to their local adult education programs, and frequently parents and members of family units are already involved in parts of community-based educational delivery systems as aides, paraprofessionals or participants. To fully utilize existing staff resources to meet the needs of a Neighborhood-Based Family Resource-Delivery System, some staff members may need additional types of inservice training, but the fact remains: the structure and many of the resources needed to initiate such a system do exist now within the framework of adult education in many communities.

Another aspect of "people resources" currently in existence in adult education is the extensive and growing professional staff development programs spreading throughout state departments of education and into local school districts as well as the yearly increasing number of excellent teacher training programs which exist in colleges and universities across the nation.

In addition to people resources, adult education also has various types of physical facilities which might be used by a Neighborhood-Based Family Resource-Delivery System for administrative as well as learning space. Combining Commissioner Bell's concern for Parent/Early Childhood Education with his emphasis on the use of school facilities as a resource for the total community, adult learning center facilities might certainly be made available for parenting education classes and learning groups, thus more fully utilizing already existing facilities that, in many cases, have been specially designed or remodeled for the adult learner.

Frequently in the past, parents have been considered "big children" in terms of their learning abilities and learning style by educators of

young children. Research has proven this assumption to be incorrect, but still individuals whose training and experience is in the education of young children plan and carry out parent/family education programs -- and frequently these programs are not as effective as they might be had they been planned with the learning needs of the adult in mind.

Adult education can provide this expertise to the Parent/Early Childhood Education movement: adult educators know adults, how they learn, and how to set up learning environments which maximize the adult's learning potential. Adult educators know how best to react to the adult learner's needs, and how to facilitate learning so that the adult is involved in the process and responsible for the product. There is no doubt that parents and other adult members of the family unit can continue to be involved in parent education programs which have not been designed by professional adult educators with some success. There is also no doubt that without professional consideration of the adult as a learner -- without an understanding of and experience in andragogy[7] -- Parent/Early Childhood Education programs will continue to be less than maximally effective in meeting the current and future needs of the American family unit.

In addition to bringing human and physical resources to bear on the problems involved in a Parent/Early Childhood Education effort, adult education has a singular contribution to offer -- that is, probably more than any other field, experience in viewing the totality of a community-based problem. Dr. Ernest E. McMahon, Dean Emeritus of the University Extension Division and Professor Emeritus of Adult Education at Rutgers has written:

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[7]Andragogy: Meaning the education of adults (from the Greek - "aner" meaning man and "agogus" meaning leader of).

> The true pattern of adult education is that of a partnership in which the educator and the participants - students, discussants, conferees, or whatever - jointly seek to identify the need and to develop the educational program which will help the community to meet that need...determination of need requires a meeting of the minds between educational planner and his prospective clients.

In determining needs, adult education has had to take a general overview of the community as well as identify specific problems; priorities have had to be set, and weights assigned within the total picture in order to make decisions about which needs can and should be met first. Consideration has had to be given to the community as a whole as well as to single individuals. Children as well as adults have had to be viewed within the total framework of the family unit, and the family unit within the total framework of the community. Interrelationships have had to be identified or established between people, organizational units and institutions. No other sector of American education can contribute so much critically needed expertise in this particular area to Parent/Early Childhood Education.

Position Statements

of the

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION

POSITION STATEMENTS

POSITIONS OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ADULT EDUCATION:

- Adult educators have an irrevocable and urgent responsibility to assist parents, surrogate parents, and parents-to-be in increasing their understanding of the influences, the skills, principles, and ideas that govern child development, and because child, family and societal welfare are inextricably related to the successful survival of the family unit, adult educators are urged to recognize the necessity for development and implementation of educational programs in the area of Parent/Early Childhood Education.

* * * *

- Program development must be guided by the following philosophical moorings:

  Program curricula, instructional techniques and strategies must be open, flexible, and responsible to family unit needs, wants, and aspirations.

  Programs must identify and disseminate education and training principles, ideas and concepts that will form the basis for reaching the diverse publics (family units) at their practical, functional, and situational interest-need levels.

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- Adult educators should call upon their experience in working with community-based needs assessments, planning groups, and advisory councils. The same strategies which operate at the community level can move into the home, diagnosing with the total family unit specific learning needs, developing the plans to meet these needs, and identifying the resources community-wide to carry out the plans.

* * * *

- No single agency or discipline alone can meet the needs of the American family unit. Adult educators must coordinate with other agencies and institutions (community schools and colleges, extension services, home economists, religious organizations, home and family life and consumer education programs) as well as schools to build on existing programs. Adult educators must, in concert with all possible institutions, be part of a team that effectuates a coordinated approach to the solving of human problems, taking a leadership role when necessary, and a team member role when that role is most appropriate.

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- The White House Conference (1970) on Children and Youth reported the extent to which the patterns of American life are influenced by employment policies and practice. The report stated:

> Employers, both public and private, can make a significant contribution to placing families and children at the center rather than the periphery of our national life by such measures as:
>
> > Recognizing their role in influencing the way American families live
> >
> > Changing the organizations and demands of work in ways which will enable children and parents to live and learn together
> >
> > Actively providing opportunities, resources, and facilities that will increase the involvement of parents and all employees in the lives of children in the community
> >
> > Developing ways for children and youth to engage in meaningful activities in the world of adults
>
> At both central and local levels, industries, businesses, and government offices should examine present policies and practices of the organization as they affect family life. Particular attention, with a view to possible modification, should be accorded the following: out of town, week-end, and overnight obligations; frequency and timing of geographical moves; flexibility of work schedules; leave and rest privileges for maternal and child care; job related social obligations; day care facilities; and number and status of part-time positions.

The mechanisms and linkages currently exist by which adult educators can facilitate business and industry's input into and support of the Neighborhood-Based Family Resource-Delivery System. Adult educators should provide the educational programs which will assist business and industry decision-makers to fully understand the needs of the American family unit.

- Recognizing that parenting never ends, adult educators can and must contribute their unique expertise to the total effort to enhance American family unit life throughout life. Adult education programs today have many objectives which, if labeled, would be considered "education for parenting" or "parenthood-education." It is the position of the National Advisory Council on Adult Education that these programs be increased and expanded, and the programs now in existence be carefully assessed and supported by adult educators in terms of adult learning needs. In developing the educational potential of parents, adult educators can increase parental understanding and knowledge of children's social, emotional and physical growth as well as their mental development. Adult educators can assist in the development of parenting skills which ultimately can aid in increasing the emotional stability of all family unit members, can provide family unit members with a better understanding of what parenting involves, and can give every family unit member the possibility of gaining more control over his or her own destiny.

* * * *

- Because the United States has more voluntary and professional organizations and associations per person than any other country in the world, and because one of the hallmarks of these organizations is their provision of some kind of adult education activity for both their paid staff and for their nonemployee leadership and members, adult educators are in a unique position within these organizations to assist in developing their contribution to the resource pool, and to facilitate their joining in the problem-solving process for Parent/Early Childhood Education.

* * * *

- As roles and responsibilities within Parent/Early Childhood Education move into clearer focus, it is conceivable that a new professional specialization will emerge in adult education. Such a specialized role might be that of the Family Life or Family Education Specialist somewhat like the Child Development Specialist now under consideration elsewhere. The National Advisory Council on Adult Education suggests the possible development of Family Education Specialist programs in college departments of adult education, and in cooperation with currently existing programs in college departments of home economics. At the same time, the Council urges the addition, either at the undergraduate or Master's degree level, of a minimum of one course in early childhood development and/or parenting education for all prospective adult educators.

- Adult educators must accept the legal and social responsibility for assisting parents, parents-to-be and family units in understanding the growth, development and learning patterns of young children within the family unit, and in developing their roles as child advocates. At the same time, adult educators must assume a responsibility for educating local, state and national leaders to the needs of and for Parent/Early Childhood Education. Because of the need for increasingly greater public support of all aspects of adult education, adult educators must assume also the responsibility for placing Parent/Early Childhood Education within the current political thrust in the United States, recognizing that economic and demographic factors must be taken into consideration as increasing amounts of necessary support are sought for this critical effort.

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- The ability of adult educators to work with non-formal agencies in non-traditional settings must be emphasized, because parent-school personnel relationships are too frequently mutually threatening, often assuming adversary status. The adult educator must be aware of a role to be played that may be useful in assisting the early childhood education specialist to function comfortably and effectively in parent-oriented environments.

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- As an integral part of the development of rural family life, adult educators should seek out the alternatives and options available for responding to the changes, forces and factors that preserve the essence of family living in rural areas. Community-Based Family Resource-Delivery Systems must be built in rural communities for rural family-unit support. Adult education cannot overlook this segment of American family unit life.

* * * *

- Finally, it is the position of the National Advisory Council on Adult Education, that adult educators have an additional and unique responsibility to the American public. It is imperative that adult educators

take responsibilities as required to initiate, facilitate or coordinate the activities needed to help parents or surrogate parents enrich their own lives as well as the lives of their children. It is imperative that adult educators seek ways to assist the family unit in meeting its problems as these problems exist today, but it is also imperative that adult educators assume responsibility for seeking the institutional changes which will place less need for parental/family unit adaptation to these institutions. Adult educators can and must be facilitators of positive institutional change, whatever that positive movement might be.

Authorizing Legislation

THE ADULT EDUCATION ACT 1/

National Advisory Council on Adult Education

Sec. 311. (a) The President shall appoint a National Advisory Council on Adult Education (hereinafter in this section referred to as the "Council").

(b) The Council shall consist of fifteen members who shall, to the extent possible, include persons knowledgeable in the field of adult education, State and local public school officials, and other persons having special knowledge and experience, or qualifications with respect to adult education, including education for persons of limited English-speaking ability in which instruction is given in English and, to the extent necessary to allow such persons to progress effectively through the adult education program, in the native language of such persons, and persons representative of the general public. The Council shall meet initially at the call of the Commissioner and elect from its number a chairman. The Council will thereafter meet at the call of the chairman, but not less often than twice a year. Subject to section 448(b) of the General Education Provisions Act, the Council shall continue to exist until July 1, 1978.

(c) The Council shall advise the Commissioner in the preparation of general regulations and with respect to policy matters arising in the administration of this title, including policies and procedures governing the approval of State plans under section 306 and policies to eliminate duplication, and to effectuate the coordination of programs under this title and other programs offering adult education activities and services.

(d) The Council shall review the administration and effectiveness of programs under this title, make recommendations with respect thereto, and make annual reports to the President of its findings and recommendations (including recommendations for changes in this title and other Federal laws relating to adult education activities and services). The President shall transmit each such report to the Congress together with his comments and recommendations. The Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare shall coordinate the work of the Council with that of other related advisory councils.

1/ This is a compilation of the Adult Education Act, P.L. 91-230, and all of its amendments, including P.L. 93-380, through August 21, 1974. (20 U.S.C. 1201-1211a)